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New York

President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral . . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Earthquake in Indonesia

The President: I should like, on behalf of all the Members of the General Assembly, to extend deepest sympathy to the Government and people of Indonesia on the tragic loss of lives and the extensive material damage resulting from the recent earthquake. May I also express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and will respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

I call on the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Poernomo (Indonesia): On behalf of the Government and people of Indonesia I should like to express my sincere appreciation and profound gratitude for the words of sympathy and sorrow just expressed by you, Mr. President.

According to reports that we have received from Indonesia, more than 100 people have died and 2000 have been injured, 10,000 homes or buildings have been destroyed, and the material destruction is yet to be determined.

I will convey the sentiments of condolence to the members of the bereaved families, and once again I thank you, Mr. President, for the sympathy and condolences you expressed, on behalf of the Assembly, in regard to this natural disaster.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by Mr. Jules Rattankoemar Ajodhia, Vice-President of the Republic of Suriname

The President: The Assembly will first hear a statement by the Vice-President of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Jules Rattankoemar Ajodhia, Vice-President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Vice-President of the Republic of Suriname, His Excellency Mr. Jules Ajodhia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ajodhia (Suriname): We were deeply shocked when we heard about the earthquake that took place last night in the Republic of Indonesia. On behalf of the Government and people of Suriname I offer our deepest sympathy to the victims and their families on this sad occasion.

On behalf of the Government and people of the Republic of Suriname, may I first warmly congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous and well-deserved election to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. We have no doubt that

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under your distinguished leadership and with your experience this session will achieve its aims. As you preside over our deliberations at this crucial juncture in history, you can be assured of our wholehearted cooperation as you fulfil your task.

Permit me also to express our gratitude to your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Amara Essy, for the very able and competent manner in which he presided over the forty-ninth session.

May I also take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for the exemplary manner in which he is fulfilling his tasks during these challenging times. He deserves our admiration and gratitude for the important role he plays in guiding this unique world Organization.

I am especially pleased and honoured to greet Palau as a new Member of the United Nations family. Suriname is looking forward to close cooperation with this friendly nation in our common efforts to attain the noble goals of the United Nations Charter.

Before I continue, I should like to express the feelings of sincere sympathy of the Government and people of the Republic of Suriname for the Governments and peoples of Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Dominica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and other territories in the Caribbean for the great destruction sadly caused by Hurricanes Luis and Marilyn.

We are living in an era in which the ending of the cold war has removed the risk of a nuclear nightmare and has given us hope that a new atmosphere of cooperation between States will emerge. If we could show the necessary political will, this new atmosphere should provide us, now and in the coming decades, with a unique opportunity to focus our attention on the solution of many problems, problems which pose serious threats to international peace and security and which hamper efforts to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

In some instances the international community has made good use of these changing circumstances and has found common approaches to problems affecting us all. Experience during the last few years, however, has revealed that our world is still characterized by unfairness and injustice, and that the gap between the developed countries and the majority of developing countries is widening. As a result the number of countries in crisis or in near crisis is increasing. Consequently, political instability, an increase in extreme poverty, social exclusion and social disintegration are on the rise in many developing countries, causing despair and endangering peace and security both nationally and internationally.

The developing world has on many occasions underlined the need to pay particular attention to the elimination of the ever-widening gap between the countries of the North and those of the South and to the establishment of a new equitable and just international economic order.

During several specifically focused international conferences organized by the United Nations, an appeal has been made to the developed countries to fulfil their obligations to meet official development assistance targets and to help to create an international economic and political climate conducive to sustained economic growth in developing countries.

Unfortunately, the response to our appeal has not fully met our expectations. It will therefore remain our priority to continue with concerted efforts to convince our developed partners that honouring their commitments and creating favourable economic conditions are also in their own interest, because there will be no durable peace and stability in the world as long as the majority of the world's population cannot fulfil its basic needs.

Another disturbing event on the present international scene is the eruption and spread of many serious violent conflicts and the increasing danger to international peace and security which these conflicts harbour. Such is the case as we witness the prolonged violent action in former Yugoslavia. These conflicts are the cause of terrible tragedy, as is evidenced by the extermination of tens of thousands of people, the casualties suffered by the civilian population, the destruction of the economic and social infrastructure, the displacement of people from their homes, and the lack of shelter, food and medical facilities. Finding a solution to these conflicts which will serve the common interests of all parties involved will remain a major challenge for the United Nations.

A few days ago the warring parties in the former Yugoslavia signed an agreement which we hope will signal the beginning of the end of the tragic war being waged in that area. We appeal in the strongest terms to all parties involved to take advantage of this momentum and engage in meaningful negotiations in order to reach

a peaceful settlement which will silence the guns now and for all time.

In Mozambique, Angola and, recently, Palestine we have found proof that seemingly sworn enemies can resolve their differences through peaceful means. The Government of Suriname is therefore very pleased with the recently concluded accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and commends both for their efforts to restore peace in the Middle East. We know that the healing process will be slow and that there are many obstacles to overcome, but we are sure that peace will finally prevail over violence, chaos and misery.

The accelerated globalization of the world economy, dynamized by a technological revolution during the course of the last decade, has led to important changes in production structures and world trade. These changes affect the terms of trade of many developing countries.

Other developments, such as the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations and the emergence of mega-trading blocs and free trade zones, have led to changes in the political and economic thinking in our region in the search for new ways of adapting to these shifting circumstances. The recent formation of the Association of Caribbean States and the decision by the countries of the Western hemisphere to create a continental free-trade zone by the year 2005 can be seen as proof of a very strong commitment to regional cooperation by our respective Governments.

To further our commitment to regional cooperation, the Government of Suriname took two steps of historic significance: Suriname became the fourteenth member State of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in July and was a co-founder of the Association of Caribbean States. Suriname is ready to make its contribution in these regional bodies in order to attain economic prosperity for its people and to preserve and strengthen its democratic traditions and values.

Just a few years ago, at the Rio Conference, we, the Member countries of the United Nations, established as a primary concern the need to ensure a rational balance between realizing legitimate national goals and safeguarding the well-being of future generations through the protection of the world's natural resources. Furthermore, we promoted the awareness that development must be sustainable and that sustainability requires due attention to both environmental and economic and social factors. The need to achieve economic development on terms compatible with the conservation of the environment is a priority objective for my country.

Suriname is blessed with an impressive, rich tropical rain forest covering approximately 80 per cent of its total territory. This makes our forest one of the main natural resources for fostering development and guaranteeing welfare and prosperity for our people. Hence, the exploitation and alternative uses of the forest have always been among our primary economic activities.

My Government promotes sustainable management of the forest, which allows for its economic utilization, but at the same time our primary concern is to ensure a rational balance between our legitimate socio-economic goals and the protection of the health and well-being of future generations. Within our limited technological capabilities, we are trying to fulfil our obligations to preserve the biological wealth of the forest.

Our responsibility and commitment in this area are reflected in my Government's policy of stringent protection for approximately 1 million hectares of forest. This is accomplished through the creation of 13 nature reserves and one national park and through additional plans to add half a million hectares of forest to the nature reserves in the short term. Hence, in the near future, 10 per cent of all Surinamese territory will be protected.

Another important step taken by the Government in the sphere of sustainable use of the forest, guaranteeing the preservation of biodiversity, is evidenced by the National Assembly's ratification in July 1995, of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. Furthermore, the results of the recently concluded negotiations with potential investors will be submitted to our National Assembly for approval. In accordance with the agreements reached, our forest will be exploited only according to the so-called Celos management system, as developed in Suriname and accepted internationally as the best form of forest management.

I should not fail to share with the Assembly our concerns over the problem of illicit traffic in drugs, especially since we, unfortunately, as a transit country, have attracted much of this unlawful and damaging trade as a consequence of our service economy, the present financial and economic crisis and our geographical situation.

Illicit traffic in drugs poses special security problems for countries like ours, with hundreds of miles

of unguarded shorelines and inadequate resources to match the super-modern equipment to which drug traffickers have access. Because of its operational methods, which have no regard for frontiers, this form of modern aggression has become one of the most serious types of international crime. It must be combated in all its various phases and manifestations.

Recent drug enforcement operations in our region have shown that firm action in the struggle against drug trafficking at the national level can be successful and that with concerted action it is possible to break up the main networks of drug traffickers. Indeed, this success stands out as a ray of optimism and hope, overcoming the temptation to yield to discouragement and pessimism in this area.

Unfortunately, it is not enough for one country or a few countries to be victorious because drug trafficking is an international crime which threatens mankind in every corner of the world. It is capable of offsetting the efforts of Governments to eradicate this scourge. Moreover, it is linked to activities such as arms trafficking and terrorism, while its repercussions are no longer merely social and economic but pose serious threats to political and social stability. However, to eradicate this multifaceted scourge once and for all, we need — now more than ever — enhanced regional and international cooperation that is effective and constructive and that complements the efforts of individual countries.

My country will persist in the struggle against illicit drug trafficking because this struggle represents a moral commitment, not only to the Surinamese people but to all people, especially to the children and young people, affected by this scourge.

The experience gained by the Government of Suriname in the field of development cooperation reveals the supportive role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and other agencies in the development efforts of Suriname.

Recently, our per capita income and the adjustment of the indicative planning figure for 1995 and 1996 were revised by UNDP. That revision offered us substantive additional support for the implementation of activities planned within the framework of the national development strategy, in particular effective activities related to the structural adjustment programme, the public sector reform programme and the regional integration programme.

On behalf of the Government and people of Suriname, we would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General and his staff for their efforts to promote greater involvement of the United Nations in fostering development in Suriname. We are looking forward to the continuation and enhancement of closer cooperation with the operational arms of the United Nations system.

Suriname is aware of the need to make the United Nations an effective instrument for the international community in the quest for sustainable development and durable international peace and security. To this end, the finances of this world body should be streamlined but, above all, the restructuring efforts should reflect today's international economic and political realities. In this regard, Suriname favours the enlargement of the Security Council as regards both permanent and non-permanent members. The increase in the number of permanent members should not however involve developed countries only. Hence we support expansion through the inclusion of permanent members selected also from developing countries which are able to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and which have already expressed their desire to become permanent members of the Security Council.

Suriname became the 144th Member of the United Nations family in November 1975. This year we will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of our independence and also the twentieth anniversary of our membership of this world body. Twenty years of experience as an independent nation and as a Member of the United Nations have revealed to us that the principles enshrined in the Charter still remain the cornerstone in relations between States.

My country has therefore on various occasions pledged its commitment to the observance of these principles. In the past, even before we gained independence, citizens from Suriname were called upon to defend these principles — in some cases, regrettably, with their lives. Today, on behalf of the Government and people of Suriname, on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, I would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution that these brave men and women have made to the maintenance of international peace and security.

At present, Suriname is part of the efforts by the international community, through the United Nations, to restore order and democracy and to foster prosperity in Haiti.

When called upon to do so, Suriname will always contribute, through the United Nations, to the endeavours of the international community to make our world a better place in which to live.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Suriname for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jules Rattankoemar Ajodhia, Vice-President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, His Excellency Mr. Ablassé Ouédraogo.

Mr. Ouédraogo (Burkina Faso) *(interpretation from French):* On behalf of the Government and the people of Burkina Faso, permit me to convey to you, Mr. President, my sincere congratulations on your well-deserved election to the presidency of this historic session of the General Assembly.

Your country, Portugal, has ties of friendship and cooperation with my own, based on the noble ideals of the Charter, and it has always worked to promote friendship and solidarity among peoples. Your election is therefore a recognition of your personal skills and qualities and also a well-deserved tribute to your country. I am certain that the other members of the Bureau will place their recognized skills at your disposal so that, together, you may guide the work of this session successfully.

I wish also to convey our warmest congratulations and gratitude to my brother and friend, Foreign Minister Amara Essy, of Côte d'Ivoire, for the remarkable work he did as President at the forty-ninth session. With his tact and discretion he gave a tremendous impetus to the work of our Organization throughout the year.

Lastly, let me once again pay a well-deserved tribute to our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has, ever since taking office as head of the Organization, been working side by side with us to give real content to the basic commitments embodied in the Charter. The Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development he has produced and the consideration they have been given since their appearance have, we believe, been instrumental in ensuring that mankind, now and in future years, will enjoy an environment of peace, security and prosperity.

The creation of the United Nations 50 years ago awakened tremendous hopes for mankind, which had, in the space of a single generation, suffered from two particularly savage wars with consequences that sorely affected the entire world and for which all peoples paid a heavy toll.

The ambitious programme of the Organization's founding fathers was to ensure for the future collective security, peace among nations and the harmonious development of peoples.

Fifty years after that profession of faith, the record continues to reflect the contradictions and antagonisms that undermine our own States. However, no Organization has so successfully embodied mankind's hopes for a better world.

Admittedly, conflicts continue to exist and development seems more than ever a fantasy. However, thanks to the concerted action of States, the world has experienced no widespread conflict. Indeed, whenever a threat to world peace has arisen, the United Nations has been able to bring machinery to bear to limit the destructive effects.

Thus, we have faith in the United Nations even though the half century through which mankind has lived since its creation has been experienced many ups and downs. But what would it have been like had the United Nations not existed to channel activities for peace, to oversee the post-war period and the cold war, to give its moral sanction to the emancipation of peoples, to coordinate assistance for economic and social development and to set a moral standard and order relations among nations and human beings?

Those are important achievements, but they ought not make us forgetful of the fact that on the eve of the Organization's fiftieth anniversary there are still many hotbeds of tension in many parts of the world.

In Europe, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, notwithstanding some glimmers of hope on the horizon, continues to cause concern to all States. We hope that the talks now under way among the parties concerned will lead to a comprehensive settlement of the situation.

In the Middle East the prospects opened up by the Declaration of Principles signed at Washington on 13 September 1993 between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization continue to yield promising results. Despite the extremists of every stamp who are incapable of accepting alternatives to violence and death, negotiations have not been broken off. The signing at Washington on 28 September 1995 of the Agreement negotiated at Taba on a timetable for the second phase of the Israeli Army's withdrawal from the West Bank and the transfer of additional powers to the Palestinian Authority is a further step in the right direction. Burkina Faso encourages this pattern of negotiation, which led to the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel of 26 October 1994 and to the opening of talks on the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria. We also encourage talks on the Lebanese-Israeli relationship.

In Asia, Burkina Faso welcomes the spirit of dialogue and cooperation that prevails between the two Koreas and between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America. We would note, however, that a country like the Republic of China in Taiwan has not been able to be among us again this year, at a time when we are to celebrate a historic event.

With respect to the question of Jammu and Kashmir, Burkina Faso urges India and Pakistan, two fraternal neighbouring countries, to find a solution to that problem through bilateral negotiations.

The African continent is facing many problems with deep and complex roots. Many African countries continue to be destabilized by savage conflicts that are causing millions of refugees and displaced persons to take to the roads and surge across international borders, where their precarious living conditions demand our attention.

In Central Africa, the Great Lakes region remains a powder-keg that can explode at any moment. The miasma of the tragedy in Rwanda can infect other regions if the problem of refugees and displaced persons is not very rapidly and correctly settled. We urge the Government and people of Rwanda to continue to mobilize against extremism and to seek genuine national reconciliation based on justice, equity and tolerance as well as on the country's economic and social reconstruction.

In Burundi, notwithstanding the efforts of the international community, the situation continues to be disturbing. It seems evident that that country will enjoy peace and security only when there is a clear and manifest resolve on the part of its political leaders to guide their country to peace and concord without hegemonistic designs or hidden ethnic agenda. In that respect the Government Convention signed on 10 September 1994 is a starting-point that should be respected.

The international community has a very great responsibility in this region. Rwanda, Burundi and the countries of asylum have an urgent and pressing need for assistance. Thus, the United Nations Conference on peace, security and stability in the Great Lakes region should be convened as soon as possible so as to give the situation all the attention it deserves.

For its part, Burkina Faso is contributing to the process by participating, on the one hand, in the Organization of African Unity Observation Mission in Burundi while, on the other hand, under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, it is participating in the maintenance of security in the Rwandan refugee camps in Zaire.

In Somalia, the warlords continue to wreak havoc in the country, unmoved by the suffering of the Somali people. We can only hope that as events unfold and lessons are learned from experience they will come to understand the vanity and incongruity of their behaviour and that they will reexamine their course of action and avert disaster for their country.

In Sudan, Burkina Faso supports the work being done by the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development to find a solution to the fratricidal conflict that has divided that country for so many years. We welcome the steps in that direction being taken by President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya.

In West Africa the determination of the States of the subregion and the efforts made to develop understanding and some confidence between the factions in Liberia have led to the signing at Abuja, in Nigeria, on 19 August 1995, of an agreement that offers prospects of peace for Liberia. Burkina Faso, as a member of the Committee of Nine on Liberia of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was privileged to act as witness to that Agreement between the Liberian factions. Like the other members of ECOWAS, it will be vigilant in ensuring that its terms are strictly complied with until the general elections scheduled for 1996 are held.

Sierra Leone, a neighbour of Liberia, has for a number of years endured a cycle of violence that has

inflicted unspeakable suffering on the civilian population. At a time when Liberia is committing itself to the path of peace, we urge those involved in the conflict in Sierra Leone to do the same, by opting for negotiations.

Burkina Faso welcomes the positive developments in the situation in Angola. We hope that the spirit of dialogue that now prevails through the Lusaka Protocol of 20 September 1994 will enable that long-suffering country to return to the path of peace, democracy and development.

I want to hail the work of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which are making enormous efforts to settle conflicts. We are firmly convinced that peace is indivisible and that the United Nations remains its primary champion throughout the world, and especially in Africa. More than ever before, Africa is seeking its proper course. While there is universal agreement on the need for democratic regimes, good governance and respect for human rights, the paths we must travel to achieve those things are tortuous and difficult. Yet, in our view, crises stemming from the transition to democracy will be quickly overcome. The real grounds for concern lie rather in the dangerous implosion we see today in African societies that are based on poorly managed democratic processes and chaotic governance and, above all, whose populations suffer grinding poverty.

Here Africa must face up to its own realities. Without questioning the need for international solidarity or the primacy of the United Nations in conflict settlement, Burkina Faso, like other African countries, knows that Africa must be the first to invest in the solution of its problems. That is what it is doing, without waiting for adequate means to be provided. It is in that spirit that Burkina Faso and its leader, President Blaise Compaoré, have been supporting the efforts of our brethren in neighbouring countries of the subregion and elsewhere on the continent.

It was also in that spirit that Burkina Faso joined the other countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in working towards the agreement between the contending factions in Liberia. And it is in that same spirit that Burkina Faso supports the Mechanism of the Organization of African Unity for the Prevention, Management and Resolution of Conflicts in Africa, which is an African response to new crisis situations on the continent.

In short, Africa has its problems. To be sure, it has received bilateral support from members of the international community. But on the multilateral level, unfortunately, all the global programmes adopted to date have been implemented only in a timid and inadequate manner. The most recent of these, including the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, are suffering terribly from a lack of financial resources and, to be frank, from a lack of political will on the part of the majority of our partners from the developed world. In this connection, our apprehensions were confirmed by the results of the recent high-level intergovernmental meeting to undertake a mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s.

Meanwhile, our debt burden has obstructed productive new investment, and deteriorating terms of trade have cancelled out earnings from commodities. More and more, Africa is losing its share of the international market, ultimately facing inescapable marginalization at a time when the globalization of the world economy is becoming apparent. But globalization demands solidarity and interdependence. We must make a choice: if wealth does not spill over borders, then poverty and destitution will.

One of the problems calling for world solidarity is that of the environment, and especially the fight against drought and desertification. When, faced with the great droughts of the 1970s in Western Africa, Burkina Faso mounted a campaign to combat this scourge, the international community did not seem to understand its importance. Today, protecting the environment is one of the priority tasks of States. The Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the June 1994 adoption of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change have truly given fresh impetus to greater awareness in this area. But what good are all these instruments without the resources needed to fight the evils they are meant to attack? Burkina Faso made a substantial contribution to the drafting of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and hopes that it will quickly enter into force, to give even greater momentum to the efforts of our countries within the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in

the Sahel, and, with respect to East Africa, within the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development.

On the eve of its fiftieth anniversary the United Nations stands at a crossroads. It must turn away from cold-war reflexes and stride resolutely towards the horizon of the twenty-first century. It must adapt quickly to the new context of a more open, globalized world, and must from now on accept the clear determination of all States to participate in world affairs. In this context, the United Nations needs to make the changes that will enable it to better profit from the contributions that States and regions are ready to make.

But the most biggest challenge facing the United Nations is undoubtedly that of the poverty and destitution that still afflict one fifth of mankind. The world of solidarity and brotherhood that we want to build will be possible only if all human beings can live in dignity. In that connection, we have been working for five years on principles and objectives for children, women, the environment, human rights, population and social development. Let us implement them.

It is with that hope that we approach the work of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. On behalf of Burkina Faso, I reaffirm our complete devotion to the noble ideals of the United Nations.

The President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda, His Excellency Mr. Lionel Alexander Hurst.

Mr. Hurst (Antigua and Barbuda): Forty-five years ago, in 1950, a destructive hurricane battered my island country. It destroyed our small homes, levelled our sugar-cane fields, left death and destruction in its path and made Antigua and Barbuda a destitute colony. It was the very worst hurricane that Antigua and Barbuda had ever experienced. Several hurricanes were to strike us after 1950, including Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

Thirty-five days ago, however, Hurricane Luis visited its fury on my small island developing State. For more than 48 hours, its mighty gusts blew the roofs from thousands of homes, schools, churches, government buildings, hotels. Its sustained winds, exceeding 160 miles per hour, uprooted many of Antigua and Barbuda's old trees, decapitated thousands of stately palms, and deposited the leaves and broken limbs of our evergreen trees everywhere. The swollen sea sent surf and sand swirling into the lobbies and beachfront rooms of our hotels — the source of our national income. Sheets of rain, carried relentlessly by the winds of Hurricane Luis, made everything wet and everyone weary. Our electricity and telephone systems were destroyed when thousands of poles succumbed to the fury of its winds, snapping cables and smashing equipment as they fell to the earth. Our fishermen lost their boats, our farmers lost their fields, and our people lost some of our courage. Nature appeared to have declared war on us. When the ferocious winds of Hurricane Luis subsided, 48 hours after landfall, the verdant, lush, tropical vegetation that had drawn millions to our shores over the years had disappeared; our islands were a mere caricature of their previous glory. The engine of our economy has stalled; tourism, the source of Antigua and Barbuda's income, has been severely compromised and we may not be able to restart the industry for several weeks. Fishermen and farmers, storekeepers and hotel workers are now without incomes; thousands are jobless. The threat of creeping poverty hangs over a people that, 14 years ago, at the end of 150 years of colonialism, had started to enjoy an improved standard of living, higher than ever recorded in our 350-year modern history. Forty-eight hours after Hurricane Luis had traversed the Caribbean, the vulnerability of small island States was again made manifest. Dominica, Guadeloupe, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Maarten, Anguilla and Montserrat all suffered a fate similar to Antigua and Barbuda's. Coming on the heels of Luis, Hurricane Marilyn would batter the island of Saint Thomas. Small island States and territories, thriving and robust on one day, were paralysed and incapacitated within 48 hours.

Development is not sustainable if 17 hurricanes are to trample through our region each year; yet climate experts have given us notice that the phenomenon known as global warming will generate a greater number of "extreme weather events", more ferocious and monstrous in each succeeding year. Hurricane Luis was 700 miles wide; its wind gusts reached almost 200 miles per hour; and its sustained winds exceeded 160 miles per hour. It was unique in its size and devilish in its fury.

There may never be sufficient evidence to link the global warming phenomenon to any single hurricane; but the pattern is evident. I draw the Assembly's attention to a study entitled "Confronting Climate Change", published by the Cambridge University Press. In it we read:

> "If global temperatures continue to rise in accordance with current predictions, increases in the number and severity of storms, floods, droughts,

> and other short-term weather extremes may be one of the earliest observed and most dramatic effects."

Carbon dioxide emissions, caused by the burning of petroleum, coal, wood and gas, since the start of the industrial revolution in Western Europe 200 years ago, have begun to warm the planet and to place the survival of small islands in jeopardy.

Three years ago, at the Earth Summit in Rio, Brazil, the nations of the world had their representatives sign the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. I read from the Convention:

> "The ultimate objective of this Convention and any related legal instruments that the Conference of the Parties may adopt is to achieve ... stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous [man-made] interference with the climate system." (*article 2*)

Earlier this year, the nations of the world met in Berlin, Germany, to consider a proposal matching this objective and linked to this Convention; it was put forward by 41 vulnerable small island States. Many industrialized countries, guilty of emitting into our Earth's atmosphere billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, would not then agree to any reduction in these gases. We cannot stand idly by, experience the deadly effects of global warming, and be satisfied with promises. Harmful production, wasteful consumption and dangerous disposal patterns continue to characterize the behaviour of the largest industrialized States. They sow the wind; small island States reap the whirlwind. In the South Pacific, where defenceless small island States predominate, another large industrialized State chooses to explode several nuclear bombs, euphemistically called "nuclear devices". We remain opposed to the testing of all nuclear weapons. If those bombs are as harmless and as safe as that State claims, then why not test them on its own soil? The same disregard for the weak and small States holds for the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes, especially shipments of nuclear wastes through the Caribbean Sea. We are dreadfully afraid of an accident and equally fearful of the impact of news of an accident on our development.

We have done much of what is required of us to ensure that our development proceeds apace and with few setbacks. Evidence of our intelligent use of our meagre resource base is captured in the annual Human Development Report published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). For example, my Caribbean country shares a common currency with five other small island States and one territory. We call it the Eastern Caribbean dollar. Its value has remained unchanged since 1976. For almost two decades, self-discipline and probity have been the hallmark of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

Hurricane Luis has severely disabled four of the seven economies which share the currency — Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Montserrat, and Antigua and Barbuda. And unfair attempts by Central American banana producers to eliminate the English-speaking Caribbean's 3 per cent of the world market share threaten to undo the other three economies — those of Grenada, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC$) can only remain stable if our economies earn foreign exchange. Unfair trade, just like hurricanes, can devastate our vulnerable small island States' economies and make the earning of foreign exchange impossible.

We share a currency, and we share a university. The University of the West Indies is soon to celebrate its fiftieth year of continued existence, having graduated an overwhelming number of professionals from the 17 States and territories of the English-speaking Caribbean which call it their own. This year my Government provided 73 scholarships to the most deserving youth in Antigua and Barbuda, with amounts ranging from $EC 54,000 to $10,000 each. We intend to build the national capacity to ensure that sustainable human development is more than a wish.

We share a currency, we share a university, we share a judiciary. The Eastern Caribbean Court of Appeals has demonstrated that justice and cost-effectiveness can be twin handmaids of small island States. Eight of us also combine our national defence forces to form a Regional Security System (RSS). Though small by any standard, we have succeeded in increasing our defences exponentially, while containing defence costs significantly. The recent invasion of the Comoros Islands by a mercenary band which took its President hostage and seized power there serves as a reminder of the security constraints facing small island States.

Our efforts at regional collaboration extend beyond a common currency, a university, a judiciary and a defence force. You have recently pronounced, Sir, on the success of "interlocking, regional building blocks" in Europe. Thirty years ago, before many of our Caribbean

countries were independent and free, we commenced that process by creating, in 1965, the Caribbean Free Trade Agreement (Carita). Carita has metamorphosed into the Caribbean Community and Common Market (Caricom), and earlier this year the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) was formed by all the States and territories which share the Caribbean Sea. More than 200 million people form this new market. Antigua and Barbuda has done much of what is required of it to achieve sustainable development. The results of our many and varied efforts cannot bear fruit if, year after year, hurricanes destroy that which we have created. We look to the United Nations to help in persuading the industrialized countries to adopt the Toronto targets, as a first step in our common effort to ensure the survival of this planet which we all share.

We have faith in the United Nations because the image of the United Nations in my country and region is positive and good. When a volcano threatened to erupt on the neighbouring island of Montserrat and my country offered safe refuge to half of that island's population, the United Nations Resident Representative in Barbados led a United Nations team of experts to Antigua; they came to determine how the United Nations could assist. Following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Luis, the United Nations Development Programme Barbados country office, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Health Organization and several other United Nations agencies and bodies quickly launched an international appeal to help us reconstruct. The most distinguished citizen of Antigua and Barbuda, His Excellency the Governor-General, was also quick to agree to be the Chairman of the UN 50 National Committee. This willingness serves as a measure of the high regard in which the United Nations is held.

My small island State can also boast that it has paid its contribution to the United Nations in full; we owe no arrears, despite the burden which membership dues and peace-keeping operations impose on our limited resources. We can only encourage the wealthy and the powerful to pay their obligations. For us the United Nations is more than a symbol; more, too, than an instrument for the narrow national interests of Antigua and Barbuda. For us, the United Nations is the guarantor of international law, an agent for international peace and security, a catalyst for development and prosperity.

The Secretary-General has noted that the greatest threats to peace are adverse social and economic conditions within States and among States. As a consequence, during the past three years the international community has convened six global conferences to plot the course of human history in the coming century and beyond. Collectively, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the First Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, and the Fourth World Conference on Women collectively create a multifaceted framework of action; this will be completed by the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), in 1996. These conferences act as a guide to Member States as they seek to address the challenges inherent in the interrelated areas of peace and development.

States must now seek to implement the several Programmes of Action. We are particularly gratified by the extent to which the last two conferences build on the positions which we took at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. In particular, my delegation would wish to emphasize the importance of empowering women. The inclusion of women in the councils of the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, and at senior levels in the public service and the private sector, gives credence to the earnestness of our commitment to the advancement of women. Without the full and equal participation of women, sustainable development cannot be achieved.

In congratulating you on your election to your high office, Mr. President, my country is very cognizant of the role which Vasco da Gama played in bringing distant worlds together. Today we find in you the same foresight and imagination displayed by your most well-known citizen. These qualities are necessary for leading this historic fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. We congratulate Foreign Minister Mr. Amara Essy, the President of the forty-ninth session, on his sterling stewardship of this Organization.

At several junctures in its 50-year history, the purpose and goals of this United Nations have been redefined. In 1945, following the end of the Second World War, the United Nations was created as a policy instrument of the victorious Powers to prevent further large-scale destruction and massive loss of life. For more than a decade the United Nations was focused on preventing a third world war.

In 1957 a little country in Africa twisted the tail of its colonial master, and Kwame Nkrumah emerged from jail in Ghana to lead his country and to redefine the

purpose of this United Nations. When the United Nations was created in 1945, colonialism defined the relations between the powerful and the weak, between Europe and much of Asia and Africa. The adoption of resolution 1514 (XV) in 1960 turned the United Nations into a policy instrument to end colonialism.

For more than a decade after 1960 the focus of the United Nations was to destroy colonialism and apartheid. My small island nation did not even enter into the consciousness of the founders in 1945. We are the beneficiaries of the struggle to end colonialism. The presence here of small island States is mere happenstance, since few expected that there could be any such creation as a micro-State, seated in this Hall as an equal of the mightiest and the largest States. In that regard, we would wish to welcome the island State of Palau to membership in this Organization.

But by 1970 the United Nations had begun to address inequities in international trade and development, and the search for a more just international economic order displaced the concerns of 1945. In the 1970s, also, the cold war exploded. Regional wars in southern Africa, Central America and the Middle East were fuelled by the two super-Powers. By the end of the 1980s the constraints imposed by the cold war and the demands on our resources for peace-keeping made the United Nations a much more complicated instrument than it had ever been.

Today our United Nations must struggle with the unfinished business of earlier decades. Small island States, in the 1990s, aware that their very existence is at stake, have tried to make the United Nations focus on the environment and development, especially climate change. If we fail in this quest, this civilization will destroy us and, in the process, destroy itself. Island States are much like the canary in the coal mine; we are the messengers, signalling the danger to the rest of the world.

Having suffered through Hurricane Hugo and Hurricane Luis, we thank the many Governments, institutions and people who have come to our rescue. The people of Antigua and Barbuda are aware of the vulnerability of small islands. We know our history and we know the role played by small States in shaping the present. My Prime Minister, the Honourable Lester Bryant Bird, has applauded the people of Antigua and Barbuda for their resilience and indomitable will in the face of adversity. If we can endure 200 years of chattel slavery, and 150 years of brutal colonialism, then surely we can recover from two nights of a horrible hurricane, he has said. We believe that small island States at this United Nations can also shape the next five decades in human history. We are here for that purpose, and we intend to succeed.

The President: I now call on the Chairman of the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Mr. Daudi Ngelautwa Mwakawago.

Mr. Mwakawago (Tanzania): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of my delegation, since my Foreign Minister is currently campaigning in the impending presidential and parliamentary elections.

Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the historic fiftieth session of the United Nations General Assembly. You bring to this office a wealth of experience and rich intellectual and diplomatic skill which assure us of a fruitful conclusion of the work before the session. And, above all, my delegation applauds your sensitivity to development issues.

A well-deserved tribute is also due to your distinguished predecessor, Mr. Amara Essy, the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, who successfully presided over the forty-ninth session.

At this juncture, I would like to pay tribute to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose indefatigable efforts in the search for peace and development are very well appreciated by my Government and the people of Tanzania. We also salute the selfless efforts and commitment of the overwhelming majority of the Secretariat staff in the service of the international community.

My delegation wishes to reiterate Tanzania's firm conviction that the United Nations is all of us - its Members. It does not exist apart from us, nor should it be used by one Member or group of Members to the detriment of the wishes and hopes of the international community. It can do only what we, its Members, are prepared to do, acting together.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon), Vice-President, took the Chair.

This is not to say that our Organization is perfect and sacrosanct, and therefore beyond criticism. On the contrary, much as we derive satisfaction from the fact that the United Nations has survived 50 difficult years,

there is plenty of scope to re-examine its role, especially now, as we are on the threshold of the next millennium.

Work in this direction has already started, and it has been covered in the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. The report draws our attention to the work under way and what needs to be done about problems which threaten international peace and security. It is up to nation States which are Members of the United Nations to reflect on, and assess the role of, the only universal organization at the disposal of all humankind.

Undoubtedly the United Nations has been doing the best possible in the pursuit of the lofty ideals of the Charter — in particular, in regard to maintaining international peace; economic and social advancement for all peoples, and enhancing human rights. While loudly faulted on its peace-keeping role, the silent achievements of the United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), need not be simply taken for granted.

Even in terms of peace-keeping operations, we only need to ask why it was possible to succeed in Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador, South Africa and Mozambique, and why prospects are now brightening in Angola, under United Nations leadership, while we have not quite succeeded in Somalia, Rwanda or Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As I speak, conflicts are raging unabated in the world, especially in parts of Africa, the Balkans and the Caucasus. A lot of work is yet to be done in the area of peace-keeping. Every effort must be made to enhance the capacity of the United Nations along the lines described in the 1992 "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277) and its supplement (A/50/60), issued in January this year.

The real problem with the United Nations rests with the new post-cold-war era. The promises of peace have eluded us and as a result we are still "in the woods" regarding the international community's ability to manage non-military transnational issues, including development, environmental degradation and inequalities within and between nations.

One point of grave concern to my delegation is that the new world order — if there is order at all — has tended to perpetuate the situation in which the wealthy and powerful nation-States dominate and seek to exert undue influence on the United Nations. Consequently, United Nations reform is urgent and imperative. The thrust of this reform must be to maintain and enhance the democratic values of the Charter of the United Nations and translate them into reality throughout the work of the Organization. We must jealously guard the central role of the General Assembly, in which all Member States, regardless of size or wealth, have an equal say. Careful attention should be given to the functioning of the Security Council. We must ensure that the Council acts within and in accordance with the Charter and that its membership reflects the realities of our times, taking into account the tremendous expansion from 51 Member States in 1945 to 185 in 1995.

In welcoming the report of the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council, my delegation restates the need to have developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean represented in the Council, in terms of both permanent and non-permanent seats. Secondly, not only is transparency in the functioning of the Council necessary, but there must also be a regularized system of reporting to, and consultation with, the General Assembly. Thirdly, the veto power has outlived its usefulness. It should be abolished, since it is a negation of democratic principles to empower any one member, or group of members, to decide on the vital issues of peace and security without due regard to the sensitivity and wishes of the majority.

The reform process under way should focus also on restoring the Economic and Social Council to its intended high status as the organ for bringing all international economic and social affairs under the strategic control of the United Nations, and here I refer to Article 63 of the Charter. My delegation believes that the governance of the Bretton Woods institutions should be democratized, along with their internal decision-making mechanisms.

Let me conclude the question of reform by quoting the very apt perception of the South Centre:

> "The opposition to a strong and dynamic United Nations is political and profoundly ideological, and is largely concentrated in a few States whose establishments prefer not to strengthen a forum in which their domestic and global policies can be challenged or trimmed. But the United Nations exists for all humankind, not just a handful of Member States representing a small minority of the world's population ... . This is not a time for despair but for determined efforts to rekindle the United Nations original inspirations and to inject a new sense of purposeful direction ... to help fulfil the aspirations of many millions of people throughout the world."

The financing of the United Nations by Member States is also badly in need of reform. As we meet here, our Organization is on the brink of bankruptcy. As of early August, unpaid assessed contributions stood at $3.9 billion. My delegation is in agreement with the Secretary-General when he laments that

> "there is no use talking about reshaping the responsibilities of the United Nations unless the resources are there to carry out those responsibilities".

It is urgent that action be taken to make good on late payments of assessed contributions, for both the regular budget and peace-keeping operations, without any preconditions. Having said that, my delegation believes that, on the one hand, the principle of financing the United Nations should be on the basis of relative capacity to pay, and secondly, that other options should be explored that would lessen overdependence on the policy inclinations of a few Members.

I should like now to turn to conflicts closest to the heart of the Government and people of Tanzania: the situations in neighbouring Rwanda and Burundi. It is heartening to note that the situation in Rwanda is gradually returning to normal following the end of genocide and the fratricidal war of July 1994. Tanzania, in the true spirit of good-neighbourliness, salutes the new government's efforts to consolidate peace, rebuild State institutions and make national reconciliation a reality on the basis of the Arusha Peace Agreement.

Tanzania, besides facilitating political mediation for the two neighbouring countries, has always readily welcomed Rwandese and Burundi peoples fleeing atrocities in their homelands. The Government is anxious that the now more than one million refugees concentrated in the western part of the country should be assisted to return home as soon as possible, but it should be sooner rather than later. It is a huge burden of immense proportions. My Government is appreciative of the international assistance that is directed to the refugees and to Tanzania. However, the ideal solution is to facilitate their speedy return to their countries of origin so that they may become part of the reconstruction and reconciliation efforts. To do otherwise is to postpone the problem and sow the seeds of future conflicts and mistrust.

Worse still, long-term damage to the environment is now a reality. Urgent measures are required to prevent the area of concentration from being stripped bare of trees. Pressure on the already overstretched infrastructure and social services remains overwhelming. This humanitarian catastrophe must not be allowed to go on indefinitely. My Government believes that the reconstruction efforts being put in place must have a component for the return of refugees.

No effort should be spared to help the two neighbouring countries create an environment conducive to the return of their peoples. In this connection, we take note of the Secretary- General's efforts to convene a Great Lakes region conference on security, stability and development, in line with the decisions of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Security Council. But my Government is of the view that commensurate efforts should first be made to implement the Nairobi and Bujumbura declarations on stability and the situation in the refugee camps. We also urge the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other organizations on the ground to extend to the region the quick impact programmes that are currently being undertaken in Mozambique and Somalia. These programmes are aimed at meeting the reintegration and rehabilitation needs of returnees on their arrival home.

Mention should also be made of my Government's readiness to cooperate in establishing the seat of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda at Arusha in northern Tanzania. The judges have since been appointed, and the Registrar of the Tribunal is already in Tanzania as part of the preparatory team. It is my delegation's view that an early start of the Tribunal's proceedings should go a long way towards helping the healing process in Rwanda.

Concerning Burundi, we commend the work of the peace mission of the Organization of African Unity and

appeal to the leaders of all parties to rise above parochial interests and work in the larger interest of their country, Africa and the world.

My delegation is especially encouraged by the positive developments in Angola, which, as we heard from its Foreign Minister when he addressed the current session, is finally headed towards peaceful settlement under the terms of the Lusaka Protocol and the Bicesse Accords. We are also hopeful that the deployment of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) will be speeded up, to ensure that the peace process remains on course.

Regarding Liberia, we are encouraged by the recent developments by which the OAU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in particular have secured agreement among faction leaders aimed at a peaceful resolution of the long-simmering civil war. The United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia also deserves our appreciation for its contribution. Consequently, it is our hope that the positive developments in Liberia will impact on the restive situation in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

Regrettably, four years on, the international community has yet to implement the United Nations peace plan calling for a referendum in Western Sahara. The parties concerned, Morocco and the Polisario Front, need to summon their politic. will and, without undue prevarication, cooperate fully with the United Nations in speeding up the process.

Africa has received with anger reports of recent mercenary interference in the Comoros. The perpetration of such a dastardly act must not be countenanced by the international community, in particular the United Nations. My delegation supports the OAU call for the speedy and unconditional restoration of the constitutional order in that African country and would also wish to recall the General Assembly's resolution on the sovereignty of the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros over the island of Mayotte.

We welcome progress in the Middle East situation. The signing in Washington of the latest agreement between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization represents an important step towards the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. We hope progress will also be made on the other fronts in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

As for the Balkans, my delegation supports United Nations peace-keeping and other international efforts aimed at finding a lasting solution to the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. We urge all parties to the conflict to invest in a political settlement and to resist the temptation of a military solution.

The continuing threat of hunger and poverty to world peace and security cannot be overemphasized. Their impact on the developing countries is made clear by the stagnant or negative rates of economic growth and declining real per capita incomes in most of the South, especially in the least developed countries, including Tanzania. As the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme said recently:

> "Poverty is growing faster than population. There are scores of countries where progress is going backwards rather than forwards. Rich countries are not going to be able to build a wall around themselves and shut themselves off. These problems don't need passports."

Internal and external factors alike have contributed to the underdevelopment of the largest segment of the world. The debt crisis, depressed prices of primary commodities, protectionist measures, the inadequate flow of direct foreign investment and financial and technical assistance, and deteriorating terms of trade are but a few of the factors adversely affecting socio-economic performance in most of these countries.

It is with this frustrating situation in mind that we intend to continue participating in the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group of this Assembly on An Agenda for Development. It must become a true vehicle for ending poverty the world over. Other supportive United Nations agencies, especially UNCTAD, which will be holding its ninth conference in South Africa next year, and UNIDO should be accorded their due importance by the international community as true instruments of development.

During the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-term Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, there was some North-South meeting of minds on what Governments ought to do individually and together to reverse the trend of underdevelopment. My Government reaffirmed its commitment to continue implementing socio-economic reforms considered beneficial to our people. Inevitable difficulties aside, the

focus is on sectors concerned with agriculture, industry, finance, civil service, trade and privatization.

At the same time, we are undertaking political reforms which are essential not only for good governance, but also for the creation of the necessary environment for economic management and sustainable growth. This exercise culminates in the multi-party national elections that will take place towards the end of this month. The understanding and cooperation of our traditional donor countries have been instrumental in supplementing our own efforts. We also count on the international community's commitment to implement fully existing programmes such as the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the conclusions of a series of United Nations world conferences, including the Fourth World Conference on Women, successfully concluded in Beijing, China, last month.

In conclusion, let me refer to two other important developments since the forty-ninth session. First, regarding disarmament, we hope that the controversial indefinite extension last May of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will lead to total nuclear disarmament and the immediate cessation and complete elimination of nuclear testing. Secondly, we urge the international community to iron out differences over how to constitute the membership of the International Seabed Authority Council, in order to formalize the work of this important instrument, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Finally, my delegation is privileged to be a part of this historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly, whose work should further reaffirm our commitment to multilateralism. We look forward to celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations later this month, when we will be called upon to reflect together on how best to equip our Organization on the eve of the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, it is important to bear constantly in mind the fact that, for developing countries and especially the least developed among them, it is not a time of rejoicing. I can do no better than to quote the address of my President, Ali Hassan Mwinyi, to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session, in which he said:

> "A supportive international environment is crucial if we are to attain sustained economic growth in developing countries, especially in the least developed ones. The United Nations must be able to play a much greater role in this matter because, unlike the Bretton Woods institutions, the United Nations is universal; its programmes operate everywhere; and it does not ignore countries." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth session, Plenary Meetings, 16th meeting, p. 5*)

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, His Excellency Mr. Mihai Popov.

Mr. Popov (Moldova) (*interpretation from French*): First of all, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations and best wishes for success to Mr. Freitas do Amaral upon his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. We are convinced that, with his profound knowledge of current global problems and his open attitude to the realities of international life, he will make a very important contribution towards the achievement of the objectives of this session.

At the same time, I should like to address my sincere thanks to Mr. Amara Essy for his productive work during his presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session.

I should also like to convey to Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Secretary-General of our appreciation for his efforts to improve the functioning of the United Nations and to assure him of the full support of the Republic of Moldova.

In this anniversary year, Moldova celebrates the passage of four years since the proclamation of its independence and three years since its admission to the United Nations.

Over these years of complex structural changes, we have preserved our aspiration of becoming a democratic State with a market economy, despite the difficulties of transition. Our country has already taken the first steps in this direction by embarking irreversibly upon the path of democracy.

It is worth mentioning that the process of democratic transformation in Moldova has been supported and is being supported by the international community and, primarily, by the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Therefore, I wish to express our gratitude to the United Nations and its Member States for their substantial support in the promotion of the ongoing reforms in our country.

In this context, I should like to describe the main developments which have taken place in our society this year, as well as our most important present concerns.

In its foreign policy, the Republic of Moldova, a neutral State not involved in political-military alliances, is developing mutually beneficial relations of friendship and cooperation with all States. It also intends to extend its bilateral links with neighbouring States, as well as with its traditional partners.

In our domestic policy we have had two main priorities: to develop and consolidate the legal and institutional framework of a State of law and the smooth functioning of institutions appropriate to a modern democratic society on the one hand, and, on the other, to ensure economic restructuring and the transition to a market economy.

So far, our country has succeeded in setting up a number of basic institutions for the rule of law. A modern constitution that guarantees political pluralism, private ownership and respect for fundamental human rights, including rights for persons belonging to ethnic minorities, has recently been adopted. Likewise, it assures the exercise of political liberty, a fact that is proved by the existence of numerous political parties and by the possibility of the free expression of political opinions. The Parliament has drafted and adopted a number of laws of major importance.

The progress achieved by our country in the process of transition has been facilitated, to a certain extent, by bilateral cooperation with other States and in the framework of various international bodies. Among the positive effects of this cooperation have been a quickening in the pace of internal reforms and the process of integration into European political and economic structures. In this respect, a major event in the external relationships of the Republic of Moldova has been its admission to the European Council. This is both a recognition of the progress achieved by our country on the way towards democratization and an encouragement to further build up the rule of law and a democratic society.

As for economic restructuring and the transition to a market economy, I can state that a number of difficulties are in the process of being overcome. This year new measures have taken aim at halting the decline in industrial output, which constitutes an important prerequisite for the relaunching of economic growth. Through a new monetary and fiscal policy, we have managed to reduce inflation and stabilize the national currency. Moreover, it is worth restating our willingness to continue our fruitful cooperation in this field with the international financial institutions, primarily the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

At present we are engaged in a crucial stage of the reform, particularly that dealing with wide-scale privatization. My government is mostly concerned to speed up privatization in the hope that this will spur economic reform and encourage not only internal investment, but also foreign capital and credits. In this context, I should emphasize that the difficulties encountered in carrying out economic reforms are linked, to a great extent, to the shortage of financial, energy and raw materials resources. The assistance we have received so far from the international financial institutions and from some developed countries has had a visible positive impact. Nevertheless, substantial and sustained external financial support is still needed for the creation of a modern restructured economy.

That is why we are counting, in particular, on the support of the European Union for securing the success of our transition. Our efforts aiming at building a market economy and integrating our country into the European political and economic structures would be strongly helped by its supportive signals and actions. The signing of the agreement of partnership and cooperation with the European Union towards the end of last year and the recent signing of the Interim Commercial Agreement have been major steps in this direction.

The difficult process of transition is being adversely affected by the anti-constitutional actions undertaken by a separatist regime which exerts temporary control over eastern districts of the Republic of Moldova.

The Assembly may remember the armed conflict which was unleashed in 1992 by the separatist movement, with external support, in the east of Moldova. Although this conflict ended, its consequences still persist. We cannot but note the gross violations of the fundamental human rights of the Moldovan population in this area. Mention should also be made of the group of political detainees, known as the "Ilascu group", which was illegally convicted and jailed by the anti-constitutional authorities of the Transdniester three years ago, and is still in prison.

Nor can we omit mention of the obstinate refusal of the separatist leaders to allow the Moldovan parents and children to use the Latin alphabet in the study of their

mother tongue. That is why the representatives of the competent international organizations in the field of human rights have noted a series of abuses and violations of the rights of the Moldovan population living in the eastern districts of the Republic.

Although the situation of the Transdniester is no longer in the forefront of international public opinion, it should be noted that no acceptable solution has been identified so far. Despite the reasonable compromises proposed by the constitutional authorities, separatist tendencies still persist. I should like to stress that the political leaders of my country have repeatedly demonstrated their willingness to solve this conflict exclusively by peaceful means by negotiation, in conformity with international law and in cooperation with international organizations, primarily with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as with Russia and Ukraine in their capacity of mediators. In a spirit of compromise, my Government also firmly believes in the principle that any proposal or initiative to settle the conflict must provide for the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova and for its sovereignty over the whole country. It was this spirit that led this year to the solution of the conflict situation in the southern region of Moldova, which is populated by over 100,000 Gagauz who obtained, under the Constitution, the status of administrative territorial autonomy.

As for the latest developments in the negotiations with Tiraspol, I should mention that a certain amount of progress has already been made, particularly in the matter of the re-establishment of economic links between Transdniester and the rest of the country.

At the same time, we believe that a political settlement of the conflict in this area could be achieved through the orderly and unconditional withdrawal of military troops of the Russian Federation from the territory of our country, in conformity with the Moldovan-Russian agreement and the resolutions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In this regard, we are still concerned that, although the Moldovan-Russian agreement was signed last year by the Heads of Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation, in the presence of Presidents Mircea Snegur and Boris Yeltsin, it has not yet been brought into force by the Russian side. I take this opportunity to voice our sincere hope that the competent authorities of the Russian Federation will speed up the procedure for the ratification of this document, in accordance with their obligations. I must emphasize that any possible failure to implement this important agreement might incur the risk of destabilizing the situation in the eastern districts of Moldova, as well as the real danger that a part of the armaments of the Fourteenth Army will be seized by the separatist forces of the Transdniester.

We hope that the competent authorities of the Russian Federation will as soon as possible set up effective machinery for the withdrawal of Russian troops and armaments from Moldova, in accordance with the bilateral agreement I have mentioned and the decisions adopted by the OSCE Budapest Summit.

The jubilee year of the United Nations is not only an anniversary but also an occasion for a lucid assessment of the achievements and failures of the first 50 years of the Organization's existence. In this respect, I want to emphasize that the United Nations has made an important contribution in the search for and identification of solutions to the numerous urgent problems at the global, regional and national levels. Even if it has not managed to prevent or eliminate regional or local conflicts, the Organization has played an essential role in preventing the outbreak of a world conflagration.

The evolution of international relations over the past years has provided favourable conditions for redefining the role of the United Nations and for adapting it better to the new realities of international life in the context of the next millennium. If this is to be achieved, there will have to be a new vision, as well as a redefinition of concrete machinery for achieving the fundamental objectives of the Organization, as inscribed in the Charter.

Along the same lines, I should say that recent years have been marked by the appearance of new concepts, which could serve as a basis for the diversification of machinery for action in various fields of United Nations activity.

With regard to the maintenance of international peace and security, there have been unprecedented qualitative and quantitative changes. As is well known, the peace-keeping operations currently being undertaken on four continents, and their mandates, continue to diversify — electoral and humanitarian activities, support for institutional reconstruction, monitoring of the observance of human rights, and so on. At the same time, new methods of dealing with crises have been

proposed — for example, stand-by arrangements and rapid-reaction forces. In this context, we expect that there will be a considerable increase in the operational capacity of the United Nations in the field of the maintenance of peace, provided that Member States support the adoption of these new proposals.

We support unreservedly the importance the Secretary-General, in his report "An Agenda for Peace", attaches to conflict-prevention machinery.

All these initiatives confirm the preoccupation of the United Nations with regard to the adoption of a coherent approach to problems of peace and security. At the same time, noticeable attention is being paid to the study of development topics. The particular interest of Member States in the Agenda for Development confirms the topicality of these problems and the need to revitalize the world Organization in this area.

In this context, I should like to make the point that, in view of the interdependence between peace and security, on the one hand, and social and economic development, on the other, it would be worthwhile for the United Nations to create an integrated system for implementation of the strategies and polices agreed upon by States. All United Nations activities, including peace-keeping and social and economic development programmes, should be complementary. At the same time, the decisions of high-level international conferences should find concrete expression in the actions of States and of United Nations agencies.

In our opinion, in the attainment of these aims it is necessary to avoid excessive politization of certain specific aspects of each field and, at the same time, find the areas that are of interest to all Member States. The United Nations system must, through its expertise and global vision, ensure a climate of cooperation and mutual confidence, without which there will be no solutions to the problems of peace and development.

The Republic of Moldova, which is deeply committed to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, is prepared to make its contribution and to support the Organization's efforts to adapt better to the fast and profound changes in the modern world. We are fully aware of the major role of the United Nations in consolidating the positive trends of recent years in the international arena and of the need to increase the effectiveness of its activities. We therefore welcome the proposals aimed at enhancing that effectiveness.

Naturally, we ourselves are well aware that the Organization cannot attain these objectives unless the Member States put the necessary resources at its disposal. That is why we pay special attention to this question and try to do our utmost to fulfil our obligations. We consider it necessary that the responsible United Nations structures adopt adequate measures to avoid waste, to ensure better use of the resources entrusted to it.

In this context, I want to refer to the problem of contributions. I am obliged to point out that for four years our country has carried the burden of a quota inequitably calculated and set at too high a level in relation to its real capacity to pay. The artificiality of this calculation is also proved by the paradox that certain countries at a similar level of development and with populations and territories twice or three times larger than ours make contributions smaller than or equal to that of the Republic of Moldova. I imagine that some other recently independent States are experiencing the same situation. This, together with the costs of transition, could explain our current arrears. We believe that this matter needs to be taken into account at meetings of working groups of the General Assembly when they examine the possibility of introducing penalties against the countries that are in arrears.

In our view, the process of diversifying the relations and the collaboration between States has enhanced the development of regional and subregional cooperation. As a matter of fact, the Charter itself puts particular emphasis on the regional organizations. Documents laying the bases for collaboration between the United Nations and regional organizations in various fields have been drawn up and adopted in recent years.

Several General Assembly resolutions relating to cooperation between the United Nations, on the one hand, and the OSCE, the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, on the other, are relevant in this regard. At present such cooperation is becoming increasingly diversified, covering new areas. Some regional organizations have acquired new competencies, including in the field of peace and security, and have thereby become partners of the United Nations in the settlement of some local conflicts. We hope that in the near future recently created regional organizations and groupings will be able to set up a cooperation framework with the United Nations, similar to the one already existing with other regional organizations. The Republic of Moldova thinks this trend should be encouraged.

At the same time, we consider that any decision of the United Nations to transfer various activities within its sphere of competence to other international organizations, especially in the maintenance of international peace and security, implies major consequences for the security, integrity and independence of States in the respective regions. That is why the United Nations should continue to exercise its competence under Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter, according to which the Security Council and the General Assembly are the main organs for dealing with and settling conflicts having regional implications.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope that the proceedings of the fiftieth anniversary session of the General Assembly of the United Nations will be carried out in an atmosphere of solidarity, of a realistic and constructive approach to the complex issues confronting the world at the end of this century. The delegation of the Republic of Moldova is prepared to contribute, alongside other Member States, to the fulfilment of the lofty goals of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.